

(2) Be integrated into certification process as part of the medical or nutritional assessment.

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985, as amended at 52 FR 21236, June 4, 1987; 53 FR 35301, Sep. 13, 1988; 54 FR 51295, Dec. 14, 1989; 55 FR 3387, Feb. 1, 1990; 57 FR 34506, Aug. 5, 1992; 58 FR 11506, Feb. 26, 1993; 59 FR 11500, Mar. 11, 1994; 60 FR 19490, Apr. 19, 1995; 63 FR 63974, Nov. 18, 1998]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 63 FR 63974, Nov. 18, 1998, in §246.7, paragraphs (b)(3) through (b)(5) were redesignated as paragraphs (b)(4) through (b)(6), and a new paragraph (b)(3) was added; paragraph (d)(1)(iii) was revised; paragraphs (d)(2)(vii) and (d)(2)(viii) were redesignated as paragraphs (d)(2)(viii) and (d)(2)(ix), and a new paragraph (d)(2)(vii) was added; paragraph (e)(1)(iii) was redesignated as paragraph (e)(1)(iv), and a new paragraph (e)(1)(iii) was added, effective Jan. 19, 1999. For the convenience of the user, the superseded text is set forth as follows:

§ 246.7 Certification of participants.

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(d) * * *

(1) * * *

(iii) *Implementation of the income guidelines.*

On or before July 1 each year, each State agency shall announce and transmit to each local agency the State agency's family size income guidelines unless changes in the poverty income guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services do not necessitate changes in the State or local agency's income guidelines. The State agency shall ensure that conforming adjustments are made, if necessary, in the local agency income guidelines. The local agency shall implement (revised) guidelines effective July 1 of each year for which such guidelines are issued by the State.

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§ 246.8 Nondiscrimination.

(a) *Civil rights requirements.* The State agency shall comply with the requirements of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Department of Agriculture regulations on nondiscrimination (7 CFR parts 15, 15a and 15b), and FNS instructions to ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise

subjected to discrimination under the Program. Compliance with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and regulations and instructions issued thereunder shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) Notification to the public of the nondiscrimination policy and complaint rights of participants and potentially eligible persons;

(2) Review and monitoring activity to ensure Program compliance with the nondiscrimination laws and regulations;

(3) Collection and reporting of racial and ethnic participation data as required by title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and

(4) Establishment of grievance procedures for handling complaints based on sex and handicap.

(b) *Complaints.* Persons seeking to file discrimination complaints may file them either with the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, USDA, Washington, DC 20250 or with the Office established by the State agency to handle discrimination grievances or complaints. All complaints received by State or local agencies which allege discrimination based on race, color, national origin, or age shall be referred to the Secretary of Agriculture or Director, Office of Equal Opportunity. A State or local agency may process complaints which allege discrimination based on sex or handicap if grievance procedures are in place.

(c) *Non-English materials.* Where a significant number or proportion of the population eligible to be served needs service or information in a language other than English in order effectively to be informed of or to participate in the Program, the State agency shall take reasonable steps considering the size and concentration of such population, to provide information in appropriate languages to such persons. This requirement applies with regard to required Program information except certification forms which are used only

by local agency staff. The State agency shall also ensure that all rights and responsibilities listed on the certification form are read to these applicants in the appropriate language.

§ 246.9 Fair hearing procedures for participants.

(a) *Availability of hearings.* The State agency shall provide a hearing procedure through which any individual may appeal a State or local agency action which results in a claim against the individual for repayment of the cash value of improperly issued benefits or results in the individual's denial of participation or disqualification from the Program.

(b) *Hearing system.* The State agency shall provide for either a hearing at the State level or a hearing at the local level which permits the individual to appeal a local agency decision to the State agency. The State agency may adopt local level hearings in some areas, such as those with large case-loads, and maintain only State level hearings in other areas.

(c) *Notification of appeal rights.* At the time of a claim against an individual for improperly issued benefits or at the time of participation denial or of disqualification from the Program, the State or local agency shall inform each individual in writing of the right to a fair hearing, of the method by which a hearing may be requested, and that any positions or arguments on behalf of the individual may be presented personally or by a representative such as a relative, friend, legal counsel or other spokesperson. Such notification is not required at the expiration of a certification period.

(d) *Request for hearing.* A request for a hearing is defined as any clear expression by the individual, the individual's parent, caretaker, or other representative, that he or she desires an opportunity to present his or her case to a higher authority. The State or local agency shall not limit or interfere with the individual's freedom to request a hearing.

(e) *Time limit for request.* The State or local agency shall provide individuals a reasonable period of time to request fair hearings; provided that, such time limit is not less than 60 days from the

date the agency mails or gives the applicant or participant the notice of adverse action.

(f) *Denial or dismissal of request.* The State and local agencies shall not deny or dismiss a request for a hearing unless—

(1) The request is not received within the time limit set by the State agency in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section;

(2) The request is withdrawn in writing by the appellant or a representative of the appellant;

(3) The appellant or representative fails, without good cause, to appear at the scheduled hearing; or

(4) The appellant has been denied participation by a previous hearing and cannot provide evidence that circumstances relevant to Program eligibility have changed in such a way as to justify a hearing.

(g) *Continuation of benefits.* Except for participants whose certification period has expired, participants who appeal the termination of benefits within the 15 days advance adverse notice period provided by § 246.7(j)(6) shall continue to receive Program benefits until the hearing official reaches a decision or the certification period expires, whichever occurs first. Applicants who are denied benefits at initial certification or because of the expiration of their certification may appeal the denial, but shall not receive benefits while awaiting the hearing.

(h) *Rules of procedure.* State and local agencies shall process each request for a hearing under uniform rules of procedure and shall make these rules of procedure available for public inspection and copying. At a minimum, such rules shall include: The time limits for requesting and conducting a hearing; all advance notice requirements; the rules of conduct at the hearing; and the rights and responsibilities of the appellant. The procedures shall not be unduly complex or legalistic.

(i) *Hearing official.* Hearings shall be conducted by an impartial official who does not have any personal stake or involvement in the decision and who was not directly involved in the initial determination of the action being contested. The hearing official shall—